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CEREBUS

RICK'S STORY

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EXCERPT

Lowell, whose personal attractiveness was immense (since his features were at once virile and patrician and his characteristic manner turned up facets of the grim, the gallant, the tender and the solicitous as if he were the nicest Boston banker one had ever hoped to meet) was not concerned too much about the evening at the theater. "I'm just going to read some poems," he said. "I suppose you're going to speak, Norman."

"Well, I will."

"Yes, you're awfully good at that."

"Not really." Harumphs, modifications, protestations and denials of the virtue of the ability to speak.

"I'm no good at all at public speaking," said Lowell in the kindest voice. He had indisputably won the first round. Mailer the younger, presumptive, and self-elected prince was left to his great surprise — for he had been exercised this way many times before — with the unmistakable feeling that there was some faint strain of the second-rate in this ability to speak on your feet.

Then they moved on to talk of what concerned them more. It was the subject first introduced to Mailer by Mitch Goodman. Tomorrow, a group of draft resisters, led by William Sloane Coffin, Jr., Chaplain at Yale, were going to march from their meeting place at a church basement, to the Department of Justice, and there a considerable number of draft cards would be deposited in a bag by individual students representing themselves, or their groups at different colleges, at which point Coffin and a selected few would walk into the Department of Justice, turn the cards over to the Attorney General, and await his reply.

"I don't think there'll be much trouble at this, do you?" asked Lowell.

"No, I think it'll be dull, and there'll be a lot of speeches."

"Oh, no," said Lowell with genuine pain, "Coffin's not that kind of fool."

"It's hard to keep people from making speeches."

"Well, you know what they want us to do?" Lowell explained. He had been asked to accompany a draft resister up to the bag in which the draft cards were being dropped. "It seems," said Lowell, with a glint of the oldest Yankee light winging off like a mad laser from his eye, "that they want us to be *big buddy."*

It was agreed this was unsuitable. No, Lowell suggested, it would be better if they each just made a few remarks. "I mean," said Lowell, beginning to stammer a little, "we could just get up and say we respect their action and support it, just to establish, I suppose, that we're there and behind them and so forth."

...continued on last page

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RICK'S STORY
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(Cerebus 220 to Cerebus 231)

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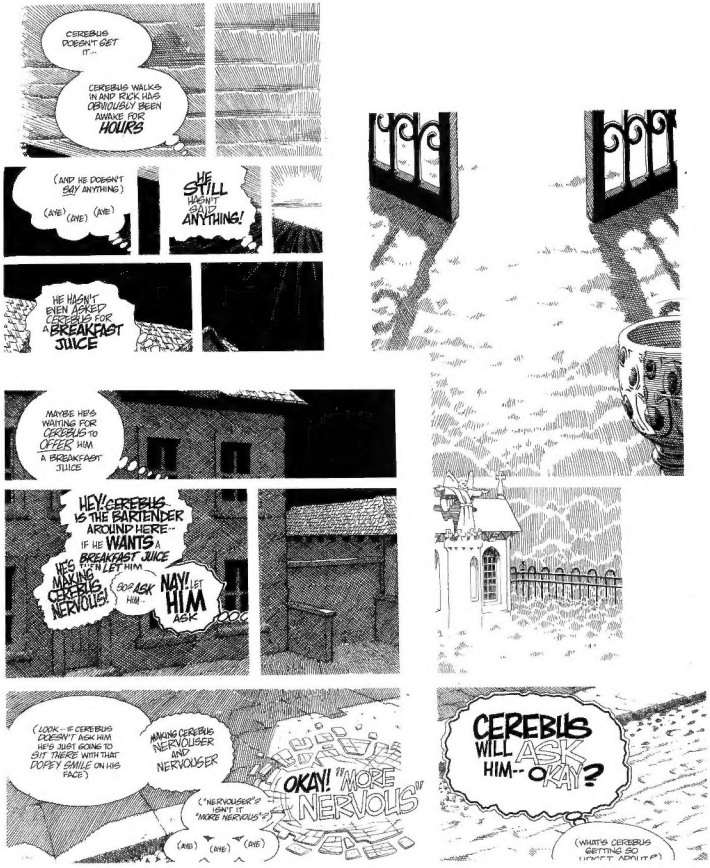

CEREBUS DOESN'T GET IT...
CEREBUS WALKS IN AND RICK HAS OBVIOUSLY BEEN AWAKE FOR HOURS
(AND HE DOESN'T SAY ANYTHING)
(AHEM) (AHEM) (AHEM)
HE STILL HASN'T SAID ANYTHING!
HE HASN'T EVEN ASKED CEREBUS FOR A BREAKFAST JUICE
MAYBE HE'S WAITING FOR CEREBUS TO OFFER HIM A BREAKFAST JUICE
HEY! CEREBUS IS THE BARTENDER AROUND HERE-- IF HE WANTS A BREAKFAST JUICE HE'S GONNA LET HIM
HE'S MAKING CEREBUS NERVOUS!
GO! ASK HIM--
NAW! LET HIM ASK
(LOOK-- IF CEREBUS DOESN'T ASK HIM HE'S JUST GOING TO SIT THERE WITH THAT DOPEY SMILE ON HIS FACE)
MAKING CEREBUS NERVOUSER AND NERVOUSER
("NERVOUSER"? ISN'T IT "MORE NERVOUS"?)
OKAY! "MORE NERVOUS"
(AHEM) (AHEM) (AHEM)
CEREBUS WILL ASK HIM-- OKAY?
(WHAT'S CEREBUS GETTING SO UPSET ABOUT?)

CHAP. 1

1. The first morning : 4 Cerebvs rebukes Ricke : 5 Parable of the Certaine Ruler : 15 Ricke seeks explanation : 16 Cerebvs counsells Ricke to have patience.

And that first morning was Cerebvs with mee in the sanctvarie and hee spake vnto mee, saying;

2 Seekest thou stronge drinke? And answering vnto Cerebvs I saide, Whatsoeuer shall bee sufficient vnto Cerebvs, let it also bee sufficient vnto Ricke.

3 Then did Cerebvs grow wroth and spake vnto mee angrily, saying; Seeke not the cuppe from which Cerebvs has drunke. Rather, bee content with thine owne cuppe.

4 Seeing my astonishment at his rebuke, hee then spake vnto mee with mildnesse, saying in a parable;

5 ¶ There was a certaine ruler, who thot to make himselfe great in the eies of his friend through his actes of exceding drunkennesse.

6 And it came to pass that tho this certaine ruler perceiued himselfe to be a wonder and an astonishment to his friend;

7 Euen so was his friend wroth with him instead and pitied him and said inwardly, My friend the certaine ruler who lieth in his own vomit and who pisseth himselfe is a stranger vnto mee.

8 And so it transpired that a uiper like vnto a scorpion and hauing a face like vnto the backe ende of a dogge, came and took vp this certaine rulers friend

9 (The uiper like vnto a scorpion hauing great melons and other deuises and atributes which gaue sicknesse vnto all saue the friend of this certaine ruler who could not see the nature of the uiper like vnto a scorpion euen before him)

10 And after the friend of this certaine ruler had bene gone away from the certaine ruler many daies, the certaine ruler was shoveling his walke.

11 And when the certaine ruler had made a path euen ouer against his house, the certaine ruler did enter vnto his owne house and closed his doore behind him.

12 And, lo, there came a great sounde like vnto the thunder of many waters and a mountaine (yea, a mountaine vpon a mountaine) fell and in falling, sealed vp the certaine ruler in his house.

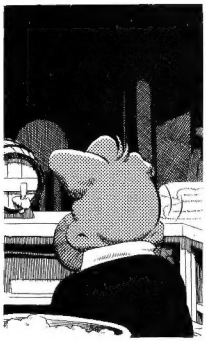
13 And for many daies this certaine ruler had his goings-out and his comings-in through an vpper windowe in his house.

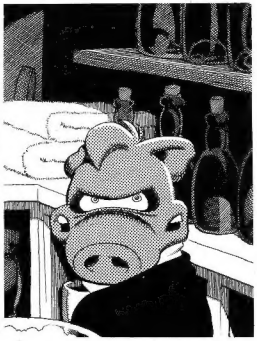
14 ¶ And I inquired vnto Cerebvs, saying, Declare vnto mee the parable of this certaine ruler and of his friend and of the uiper like vnto a scorpion hauing a face like vnto the backe ende of a dogge.

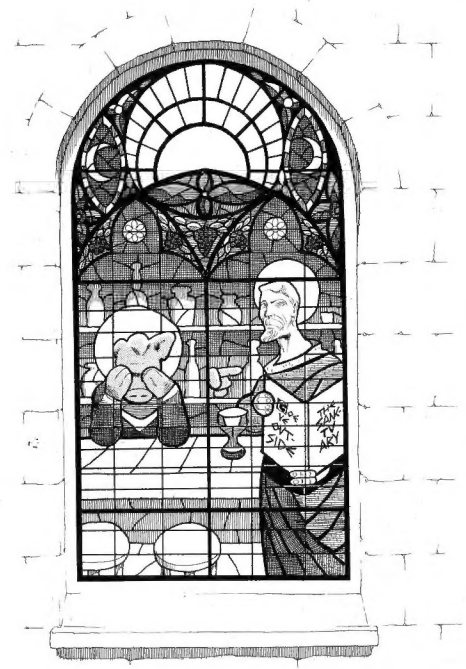
16 And Cerebvs answered mee, saying; Verily, thou shalt not drinke from the cuppe from which Cerebvs drinkes vntill thou knowest the meaning of this. Vntil then, thou shalt drinke from thine owne cuppe onely.

17 And Cerebvs went foorth behinde the barre for the pouring of the morning cuppe (and that in a fulle measure).

18 And as the morning cuppe was poured I tooke counsell within myselfe of the words of Cerebvs and the parable he had spoken vnto me, that first morning in the sanctvarie after his spirit had come vpon me.







CHAP. II

1. The morning cuppe : 5 Ricke pledges to follow Cerebvs : 7 Cerebvs tempts Ricke : 15 writing is the pathway to peace

After that Cerebvs had giuen vnto mee the morning cuppe of the full measure, Cerebvs placed it before mee and then rose vp within the sanctvarie and moued a litle apart from mee.

2 In seeing what Cerebvs had done; so too did I rise vp within the sanctvarie (from the third stoole vpon his lefte hande) and made myselfe to follow Cerebvs.

3 Seeing that I had risen vp within the sanctvarie from the third stoole vpon his left hand and that I made myself to follow vnto him, Cerebvs halted behinde the barre and in turning, regarded mee and spake vnto mee, saying;

4 ¶ Why dost thou follow Cerebvs?

5 And I answered vnto him, saying, In all things dost Ricke follow Cerebvs. Now and peraduenture in all daies yet to come.

6 And Cerebvs grew wroth and spake angrily, inquiring of mee, Art thou a foole who, following Cerebvs, knowest not where Cerebvs doth goe?

7 If Cerebvs shouldst peraduenture walke off of a talle cliffe, wouldst thou follow Cerebvs in walking off of that same talle cliffe?

8 And further, if Cerebvs shouldst plunge himselfe into the sea, wouldst thou likewise plunge thyself into that same sea?

9 And I answered vnto Cerebvs saying, Yea; of a truth; it is the desire of Rickes heart to follow Cerebvs euen off of the tallest of talle cliffes,

10 And likewise is it the desire of Rickes heart to follow Cerebvs euen vnto the deepest depths of the deepest seas.

11 ¶ And Cerebvs moued his head to and fro (that in so doing hee might regard the barre of Cerebvses left hande and likewise the barre of Cerebvses righte hande) And as beforetimes Cerebvs once more spake mildly vnto mee, saying;

12 No place is there within the sanctvarie that Ricke has not bene and Cerebvs as well. Neither vpon the stooles, nor behinde the barre, nor at the tables. All of these places haue ye bene and Cerebvs as well.

13 Therefore what profite shall there bee for Ricke in following Cerebvs within the sanctvarie?

14 Goe ye foorth out of the sanctvarie. For the daie is warm and it shall not alwaies bee so.

15 Goe yee foorth out of the sanctvarie. And write in thy Booke for the writing in thy Booke makes thee silent and stille.

16 And Ricke did inqvire of Cerebvs asking, Is it the will of Cerebvs that Ricke shouldst write in his Booke the parable of the certaine ruler and of his friend and of the uiper like vnto a scorpion hauing a face like vnto the backe ende of a dogge?

17 And Cerebvs (putting his face vpon his palmes) began to pray, saying,

18 In Tarim's name, doe now what seems good to thee in thine own eies. Write in thy Booke or write not in thy Booke, but in Tarim's name goe yee foorth out of the sanctvarie to doe it.

CHAP. III

1. Ricke enunciates Truth

OVtside the sanctvarie did Ricke begin to write of Cerebvs and the sanctvarie and the Truth:

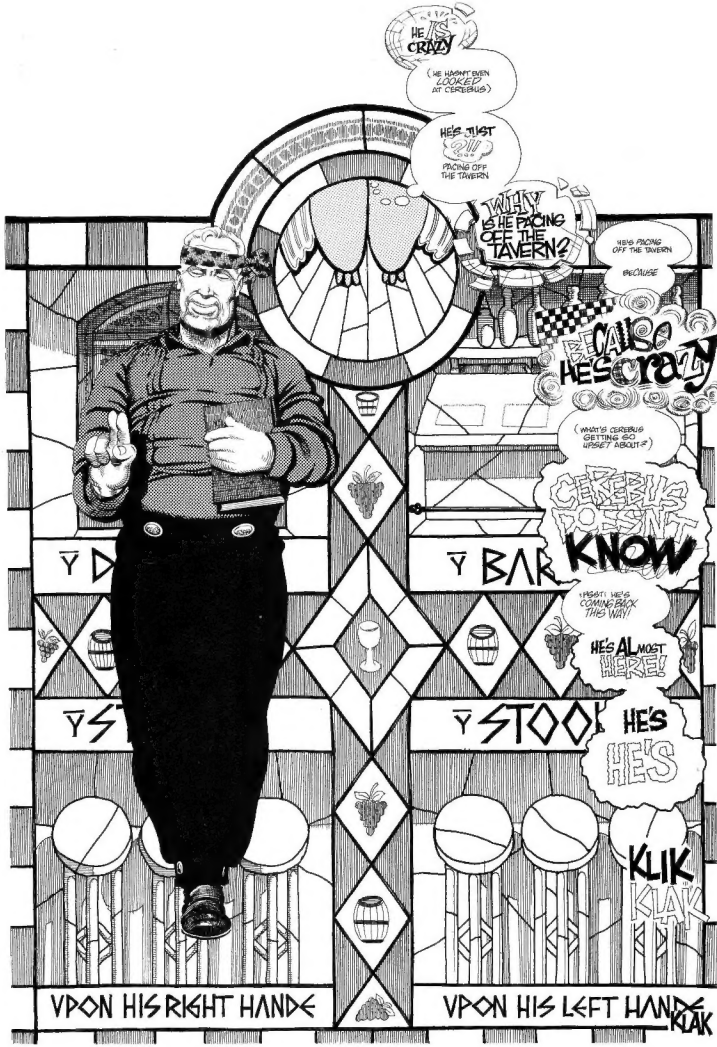
2 Cerebvs was of the sanctvarie, and the sanctvarie was of Cerebvs.

3 Like vnto Cerebvs was the sanctvarie, and like vnto the sanctvarie was Cerebvs.

4 And the sanctvarie was

HE'S GRABBY
HE'S NOT CRAZY... HE'S JUST THUNG OVER
HAH!
(IF HE WAS JUST HUNG OVER HE WOULD'VE WANTED A BREAKFAST JUICE RIGHT AWAY!)
AYE AYE AYE
HE SAID HE'S GOING TO FOLLOW CEREBUS EVERYWHERE
HE WAS JUST KIDDING
(PLEASE SAY HE WAS JUST KIDDING...)
DID HE LOOK LIKE HE WAS KIDDING?
THIS IS TERRIBLE
CEREBUS PRACTICALLY THREW JOANNE OUT OF HERE
AYE. AYE.
NOW CEREBUS CAN'T LEAVE
IF CEREBUS RUNS INTO SOMEONE CEREBUS KNOWS
"HEY, CEREBUS! WHAT'S YOUR heh-heh FRIEND WITH THE HAR-HAR BOW IN HIS HAIR?"
WHY DIDN'T CEREBUS JUST LET JOANNE TAKE GIRLY-BOY?!
THEY COULD'VE BEEN ON THEIR HONEYMOON TORTURING EACH OTHER RIGHT NOW IF CEREBUS HADN'T BEEN SO... SO
HE'S GETTING UP!
WHY IS HE GETTING UP?
CEREBUS DOESN'T KNOW.
HE
HE'S COMING BACK INSIDE!
WHAT'S CEREBUS GOING TO DO?
CEREBUS WON'T MOVE
HE CAN'T FOLLOW CEREBUS IF CEREBUS ISN'T MOVING
CEREBUS WON'T MOVE ... AND CEREBUS WON'T SAY ANYTHING
AND MAYBE HE'LL FORGET CEREBUS IS HERE AND HE'LL GO AWAY...
OH. RIGHT. AND
KLIK KLAK
SH! SH!

TUNK
AND THE SANCTIMONIOUS WAYS
TUNK.


HE JUST CRAZY
(HE HASN'T EVEN LOOKED AT CERBERUS)
HE'S JUST
PACING OFF THE TAVERN
WHY IS HE PACING OFF THE TAVERN?
HE'S PACING OFF THE TAVERN
BECAUSE
BECAUSE HE'S CRAZY
(WHAT'S CERBERUS GETTING SO UPSET ABOUT?)
CERBERUS DOESN'T KNOW
PSSST! HE'S COMING BACK THIS WAY!
HE'S ALMOST HERE!
HE'S
HE'S
KLIK
KLAK
KLAK
VPON HIS RIGHT HANDE
VPON HIS LEFT HANDE

CHAP. III

1. Ricke enunciates Truth : 4 the vestibule and the sanctvarie : 8 the windowes : 11 the table of the west wall : 14 the chairs of the west wall : 18 The Barre : 20 the stooles of The Barre : 25 the tables of the north wall : 28 the chairs of the north wall : 32 The Partition : 35 The Seat of Truth : 36 The Cushion of Reste : 43 the Table of the Foure : 46 latter daies : 49 Tableux of the Sanctvaries : 51 the foure parts of the Tableux : 52 the Seate of the Left Hande 53 the Boxe of the Wood : 55 the Forge and the Furnace : 58 the Seate of the Righte Hand

Utside the sanctvarie did Ricke begin to write of Cerebvs and the sanctvarie and the Truth:

2 ¶ Cerebvs was of the sanctvarie, and the sanctvarie was of Cerebvs.

3 Like vnto Cerebvs was the sanctvarie, and like vnto the sanctvarie was Cerebvs.

4 And the sanctvarie was ouer against the vestibule, and of the sanctvarie was the vestibule.

5 And the vestibule of the sanctvarie was four paces and one halfe in its width and four paces and one halfe in its lengthe.

6 And the doore of the vestibule of the sanctvarie on its outer side swung to the left vpon its inward part.

7 And the doore of the vestibule of the sanctvarie (which doore gave in vpon the sanctvarie) was ouer against the righte hande of the vestibule and swung to the righte vpon its inward part.

8 ¶ And six windowes were vpon the west wall of the sanctvarie. And the six windowes were each equall in size and square (hauing foure sides each and equall).

9 And the windowes of the west wall were in rowes of two, one vpon another. And in each of the rowes of two of the windowes of the west wall were three windowes each equall in size and square (hauing four sides each and equall)

10 And before the windowes of the west wall on the inward parte of the sanctvarie was a table.

11 And the table of the west wall was rounde vpon its top and vpon one center poste rested the top of the table of the west wall.

12 And the center poste of the table of the west wall was rounde like vnto a cylinder. Like vnto a cylinder was the center poste of the table of the west wall.

13 And the base of the table of the west wall was round like vnto the top of the table of the west wall howsobeit the base of the table of the west wall was smaller than the top of the table.

14 And there were two chairs ouer against the windowes of the west wall. To the north side going northward of the table of the west wall was one chair and to the south side going southward of the table of the west wall was an other chair.

15 And each of the chairs ouer againste the windowes of the west wall had each a backe vpon them.

16 And the backes of the chairs of the west wall were both square (like vnto the doore and the windowes) vpon their downward side and rounde (like vnto the top of the table and the base of the table of the west wall) vpon their upward side.

17 And the backes of the chairs of the west wall rested vpon two small postes like

vnto cylinders (tho not so large as the center poste of the table of the west wall) which ioined the backes of the chairs to the seates of the chairs of the west wall. Like vnto the small postes were the legges of the chairs of the west wall. And each chair had four legges which were round like vnto the two small postes.

18 ¶ Standing forward of the South Wall was The Barre behinde which Cerebvs stood (vpon boxes of vnfinished wood hauing many splinters which vexed and troubled him sorely)

19 And the length of The Barre was eighteen paces. Eighteen paces was the length of The Barre standing forward of the South Wall.

20 And before The Barre of the South Wall stood stooles.

21 And the stooles of The Barre were taller than the chairs of the table of the west wall. Like vnto the chairs of the west wall were the stooles of The Barre except hauing no backes and being taller; and the seates of the stooles of The Barre were round like vnto the top of the table of the west wall.

22 And like vnto the legges of the chairs of the table of the west wall were the legges of the stooles of The Barre and round.

23 And the stooles of The Barre were sixe in number. Sixe in number were the stooles of The Barre.

24 And three of the stooles of The Barre were vpon Cerebvses right hande, and three of the stooles of The Barre were vpon Cerebvses left hande.

25 ¶ And ouer against the north wall were three tables. Three tables were ouer against the north wall.

26 Like vnto the table of the west wall were the three tables of the north wall howsobeit that the three tables of the north wall were taller than the table of the west wall; and the tops of the three tables of the north wall were of smaller circumference thā the top of the table of the west wall.

27 But the center postes of the three tables of the north wall were like vnto the centre poste of the table of the west wall in their circumference, and the bases of the tables of the north wall were alike vnto the base of the table of the west wall.

28 And each of the three tables of the north wall had two chairs each. Two chairs each had the three tables of the north wall.

29 And each of the three tables of the north wall had one chair vpon its east side running eastward; and each of the three tables of the north wall had one chair vpon its west side running westward.

30 Like unto the stooles of The Barre were the chairs of the tables of the north wall, howsobeit that the chairs of the tables of the north wall had backes (which in the stooles of The Barre were lacking thereof).

31 Like vnto the backes of the chairs of the table of the west wall were the backes of the chairs of the tables of the north wall.

32 And vpon the north wall of the sanctvarie, eastward of the three tables of the north wall was The Partition.

33 ¶ And The Partition was foure paces in its width and was halfe of one hands width in its depth and The Partition was attached to the north wall and ascended to the full height of the north wall and was attached to the ceiling of the sanctvarie.

34 And The Partition stood out from the north wall rvnning southward foure paces.

35 ¶ Eastward of The Partition ouer againste the north wall (two paces eastward) was the Seate of Truth, hewen of the finest timbres and of square beames.

36 Vpon the backe of the Seate of Truth was the Cushion of Reste, rounde and woven of the finest silke and embroidered with threade of blew and scarlett and purple

37 And vpon the Seate of Truth sat Ricke with his Booke iudging al matters as they pertained to Cerebvs and the sanctvarie and Truth.

38 It was vpon the Seate of Truth that Ricke was first told of Goe On and Beate It and Scramme by Cerebvs, that Ricke might write his Booke of Cerebvs and the sanctvarie and Truth.

39 Likewise was Ricke vpon the Seate of Truth when Cerebvs did call foorth the Queene of All Daemons to test Ricke in his faith.

40 Still likewise was Ricke upon the Seate of Truth when Cerebvs was taken by his Daemon Selfe and sought to imprison Ricke in the depths of the Infinite Serpents realm.

41 Ricke was of the Seate of Truth and the Seate of Truth was of Ricke.

42 Like vnto Ricke was the Seate of Truth and like vnto the Seate of Truth was Ricke.

43 ¶ Eastward of the Seate of Truth was the Table of the Foure.

44 And the Table of the Foure stood on the left hande of Ricke when he sat vpon the Seat of Truth.

45 Like vnto the table of the west wall and the three tables of the north wall was the Table of the Foure howsobeit that the Table of the Foure was shorter than either the table of the west wall or the three tables of the north wall. Also was the Table of the Foure greater in the circumference of its top than the table of the west wall or the three tables of the north wall. In all other respects was the Table of the Foure like vnto the table of the west wall and the three tables of the north wall.

46 It was at the Table of the Foure that Ricke foresaw the latter daies of Cerebvs and of the sanctvarie and of Truth.

47 Howsobeit that Ricke spake not vnto Cerebvs of his vision of the latter daies for such was it giuen vnto Ricke of the Seate of Truth that Ricke onely should know these things

48 Like vnto Ricke was the Seate of Truth and like vnto the Seate of Truth was Ricke.

49 ¶ Ouer againste the south wall eastward of the Barre (which side of the Barre being of a strait line with the Partition) and standing before the Seate of Truth was the Tableux of the Sanctuaries.

50 And the Tableaux of the Sanctuaries spoke to the Seate of Truth and to Ricke of all things concerning Cerebvs and the sanctuarie and the Truth.

51 Of foure parts was the Tableux of the Sanctuaries; of the Tableux of the Sanctuaries was there foure parts.

52 ¶ Of the first part of the Tableaux of the Sanctuaries was the Seate of the Left Hande standing at the meeting of the west wall and of the south wall forward of the Table of the Foure and hauing as its righte interpretation one of the chairs of the Table of the Foure. And the interpretation was of the Infinite Serpent for the Seate of the Left Hande was the Infinite Serpents Seate

53 ¶ And to the righte of the Seate of the Left Hande stood the Boxe of the Woode forward of the Table of the Foure and hauing as its righte interpretation one of the chairs of the Table of the Foure. And the interpretation was of the Infinite Serpent for the woode of the Boxe of the Woode were the soules of those held by the Infinite Serpent. And the interpretation was also of Tarim for the woode of the Boxe of the Woode held likewise the soules which were of Tarim and which would be claimed by Tarim in the latter daies.

54 And the Boxe of the Woode was like vnto the boxes vpon which Cerebvs stood (being vnfinished).

55 ¶ And to the righte of the Boxe of the Woode was the Forge of the Refinement which was also the Furnace of the Eternal Fire standing forward of the Seate of Truth and vpon the left hande of the Seate of Truth and hauing as its righte interpretation one of the chairs of the Table of the Foure.

56 And the righte interpretation of the Forge of Refinement was of Tarim for in it would Tarim refine the soules which he would claim in the latter daies.

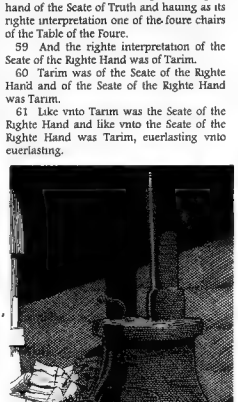
57 And the righte interpretation of the Furnace of the Eternal Fire was of the Infinite Serpent for in it would the soules not claimed by Tarim burn in euerlasting fire.

58 ¶ Ouer againste the south wall in the corner formed of the south wall and the eastward side of the Barre and to the righte of the Forge Which Was The Furnace and the Furnace Which Was The Forge stood the Seate of the Righte Hande standing forward of the Seate of Truth and vpon the righte hand of the Seate of Truth and hauing as its righte interpretation one of the foure chairs of the Table of the Foure.

59 And the righte interpretation of the Seate of the Righte Hand was of Tarim.

60 Tarim was of the Seate of the Righte Hand and of the Seate of the Righte Hand was Tarim.

61 Like vnto Tarim was the Seate of the Righte Hand and like vnto the Seate of the Righte Hand was Tarim, euerlasting vnto euerlasting.



THIS IS RIDICL
CEREBUS IS JUST
TO GO OUT THERE AND SA
"RICK? CEREBUS IS LEAVING--RIGHT NOW! AND CEREBUS DOESN'T WANT YOU FOLLOWING HIM!"
"OR ELSE!"
AYE AYE
CEREBUS CAN'T DO THIS!
WHY? WHY? WHY?
IS CEREBUS KIDDING?!! RICK'S A MENTAL CRIPPLE NOW! IF CEREBUS DOESN'T STAY HERE, THE WORLD WILL EAT RICK ALIVE

1 Rickes blaspheme . 3 Cerebvs summons the Queene of all Daemons to punish Ricke : 7 Cerebvses compassion 9 Cerebvs instrvcts Ricke in the casting out of daemons . 12 Cerebvs heals Rickes arme

And I, Ricke, did blaspheme againste Cerebvs and the sanctvarie and the Truth beforetimes that the spirit of Cerebvs came vpon me. And this doe I herein and hereby confesse:

2 Taken by the vncleane spirit of the Seate of the Left Hande I did place myselfe aboue Cerebvs and scorn his name and did mocke him in my heart as a fallen pope and raise myselfe vp in my heart as the chosen one of Tarim.

3 And in the euill imaginings of my heart I did heap scorn vpon Cerebvs and trouble him so that hee bade the Infinitie Serpent to summon foorth the Queene of All Daemons to punish mee for my transgression and my iniquitie.

4 So fierce and terible in all her aspects was shee that I was seized with a great fear and trembling vpon the Seate of Truth. And shee came nigh vnto mee.

5 And tho I closed my eies against her fearsome and terible forme, still could I heare as shee began to laie her egges within the sanctvarie before the Furnace of the Eternal Fire.

6 And each of her egges began to hatche open reuealing the daughters of all daemons who made themselues readie to set vpon me and to rend mee in pieces. And I, Ricke, hauing my arme broken in two places was bound in a sling was thereby helpelesse to hinder them.

7 Then did Cerebvs haue compassion vpon me in my affliction and spake mildly vnto me saying, Open thine eies. Shee who thee has troubled you is gone from you.

8 And I did I as he bade mee and, lo, the Mother of All Daemons was gone (and her egges as well).

9 And Cerebvs soothed mee with his wordes saying, Whensoeuer thou wouldst thrust one such as these from you, ye need only to speake vnto them saying;

Goe on and Beate it and Scramme.

And I hearkened vnto Cerebvs and [illegible] e asked if I vnderstood the wordes he [illegible] 'oen vnto mee I saide, Yea, Ricke [illegible] ds.

[illegible] my vnderstanding pleased him [illegible] hen did Cerebvs place his hand [illegible] g and my arme (which was [illegible] places) and say vnto mee;

[illegible] off thy sling for your [illegible] ath made thee whole.

[illegible] was as Cerebvs had saide.

[illegible] vnderstande that Cerebvs [illegible] an I in all waies, hauing [illegible] ale a wound and to [illegible] the Serpents daemons

CHAP. V

1 Rickes second test · 3 Cerebvs intreats Tarim to send Ioanne : 5 Cerebvs takes counsell with Ioanne : 7 Ricke and Ioanne speake together . 10 Ioanne is astonished by Rickes vnderstanding :

BUt Cerebvs knew in his greater wisdome that tho Ricke had now a greater vnderstanding than hee had beforetimes; still was Rickes vnderstanding not yet perfite like vnto the wisedome and vnderstanding of Cerebvs.

2 And so it came to passe that on the following daie Cerebvs did deuise a test for Ricke to try Rickes faith and vnderstanding.

3 And Cerebvs did intreat of Tarum that he [illegible] vnto the sanctvarie one of his A[illegible] which was called Ioanne

4 [illegible] when Ricke beheld Ioanne, Ricke [illegible] within his chest [illegible] exceeding [illegible]ure and her nature [illegible] her [illegible] to the brilliancy

5 [illegible] Cerebvs [illegible] Ricke [illegible] Ioanne [illegible] kingdome [illegible] his [illegible] Ricke [illegible]

HELP BE HELPLESS HELPLESS IN MYSELF
HELPLESS! T WOULD BE LIKE LIKE
IT WOULD BE LIKE GIVING A SWORD AND A SHIELD TO A BABY AND TELLING IT :
GO YE FORTH AND MAKE CEREBVSES ENEMIES
A FOOTSTOOL
WHAT.
CEREBUS
TALKING ABOUT.
CEREBUS DOESN'T KNOW
TWITCH THEN:
WHY IS CEREBUS GET TING SO UP SET ?

CHAP. VI

1. Ricke returnes to the sanctvuarie : 2 the Prophet Viktor : 3 Cerebvs enunciates the Truth : 10 Cerebvs calls forth Ioanne : 11 Rickes faith and vnderstanding is tested : 34 the Cuppes of Vnderstanding

THus did Ricke returne vnto the sanctvarie with a grieuous wounde vpon the righte side of his head and euen more grieuous a wounde vpon the left side of his chest so that hee suffered euen vnto death.

2 And Cerebvs quoted the prophet Viktor vnto Ricke saying, Hee who chases after women will get what hee deserues (that Ricke might know he had bene tested in his faith and his vnderstanding)

3 And Cerebvs spake further vnto Ricke saying, Shee was euen a woman you had iust met.

4 And Ricke vnderstoode the Truth of Cerebvses wordes.

5 ¶ And Cerebvs saide, Grieue yee not for a woman yee haue not lain with, for there is no profite for thee in thus.

6 And Ricke likewise vnderstoode the Truth of these wordes of Cerebvs.

7 And Cerebvs saide further, Euen hadst thou lain with her one time or, yea, euen hadst thou lain with her vnto seuen and seuentie times, euen so would there bee no profite for thee in grieuing for any woman.

8 And Cerebvs in testing Ricke of his faith and vnderstanding inquired of Ricke, Seest thou any profite in grieuing for any woman?

9 And Ricke replying vnto Cerebvs answered vnto him saying, Nay.

10 ¶ Then did Cerebvs call foorth the Angel called Ioanne hauing now the forme of a woman. And shee came foorth on the shrieking of a great winde.

11 And Ioanne did inquire after Rickes welfare and did accuse Cerebvs of striking Ricke.

12 And Cerebvs inquired of Ricke asking, Wilt thou have this strange woman to minister vnto thee in the sanctvarie?

13 And Cerebvses spirit was vpon Ricke insomuch that Ricke saw that Ioanne was not an Angel but merely a woman (howsobeit a woman hauing great melons).

14 And then the woman Ioanne did seize Ricke and aske of Ricke, Am I not the Angel who spoke with thee and who smiled vpon thee?

15 And Ricke denied her not of this saying.

16 And the darknesse like vnto darke waters came vpon Ricke in that moment.

17 And when Ricke came again to himselfe, lo, hee was bound in fetters and stoode in a lake of liuing fire and a deuill hauing Ioannes voice was rending the flesh of Rickes woundes with the handes of a viper like vnto a scorpion and speaking vnto Ricke saying, Hold ye stil.

18 And saying as well, I am not bad, I am not bad.

19 And againe the darknesse like vnto darke waters came vpon Ricke.

20 And when Ricke came again to himselfe, Ioanne had once more the forme of a woman and was speaking vnto Ricke and saying, Yee haue no wounde; and further saying, I did not attend thee last night for my mother was taken with a feuer.

21 ¶ And then did Cerebvs (beang taken by the aspect of his Daemon Selfe) adiure her, saying;

22 Speake not thy lies vnto us within the sanctvarie but get thee hence, deuill.

23 And the woman Ioanne spake vnto Ricke saying, I speake no lies, for am I not an Angel as yee haue seen?

24 And of a Truthe in that moment shee did become radiant and exceding fair like vnto the Angel Ricke had seen.

25 ¶ And Cerebvs spake vnto Ricke a parable saying, Doth the Angel of Tarim haue a grandmother taken with the ringworme? Or doth her vncle haue the gout? And in hauing these wil shee not keepe herselfe apart from thee alwaies?

26 And Ricke vnderstood not this parable that Cerebvs had spoken in his greater wisdome (that Ricke might know his own lacke in faith and vnderstanding).

27 And Ricke, hauing no certaintie if Ioanne was woman or deuill or Angel inquired of her, Was thy mother Truely taken with a feuer as thou has saide?

28 And in stead of Ioanne there was suddenly a great deuill, tormenting Ricke with the tongue of a viper like vnto a scorpion and saying vnto Ricke;

29 Ye haue cast out the Angel of Tarim by your word and shee has gone farre from thee foreuer and alwaies for thou hast called your Angel a Liar.

30 At the wordes of the deuill Ricke was taken with a great fear and trembling in thinking that hee had cast out his Angel.

31 ¶ And when the three had gone forth from the sanctvarie, Ricke inquired of Cerebvs, Did shee lie? (howsobeit Ricke knew not himselfe whether he asked of the woman or the deuill or the Angel).

32 But Cerebvs hauing a perfite vnderstanding of all that was in the heart of Ricke euen of those things hidden from Ricke himselfe spake vnto Ricke saying,

33 They all lie (meaning the woman the deuill and the Angel).

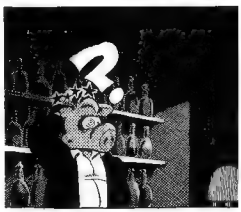
34 And Ricke vnderstood these words of Cerebvs with a more perfite vnderstanding then beforetimes.

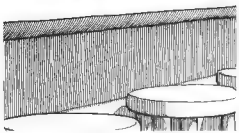
35 And seeing Rickes more perfite vnderstanding Cerebvs ministered vnto Ricke with the Cuppes of Vnderstanding that Ricke might further perfect his faith and vnderstanding (telling Ricke many parables of the Pig whose purse had ensnared the uitals of the Beare).

36 ¶ And it came to passe that a great light shone vpon Ricke euen as his vnderstanding and his faith became perfect like vnto that of Cerebvs. And euen as Ricke considered how hee had bene ensnared by the woman and the deuill and had bene wont to leave Cerebvs and the sanctvarie and the Truth, lo, it came to passe of a moment that Ricke saw the gates of Vanaheim opening vnto him and a lowd voice speaking vnto Ricke the Two Parts of the Great Truth:

37 They All Leave and They All

38 I'M SORRY!



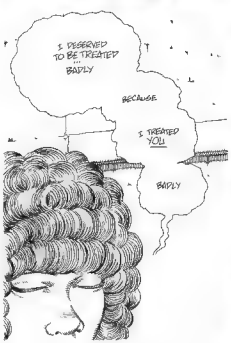


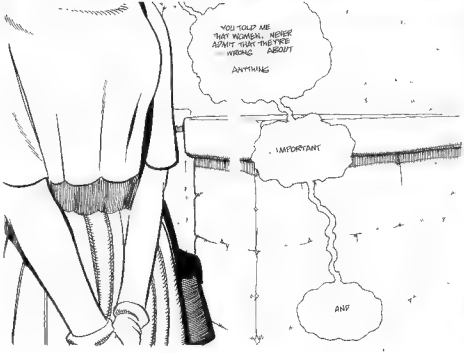
I LIED
MY MOTHER DIDN'T HAVE A FEVER
I WENT TO ANOTHER BONFIRE
WITH A MAN I DON'T EVEN LIKE
DON'T YOU
I'M NOT
WHAT.
GOING
OW.
SHE WAS RIGHT THERE.
CERBERUS SAW HER
SNIFF
I'M JUST
JOANNE

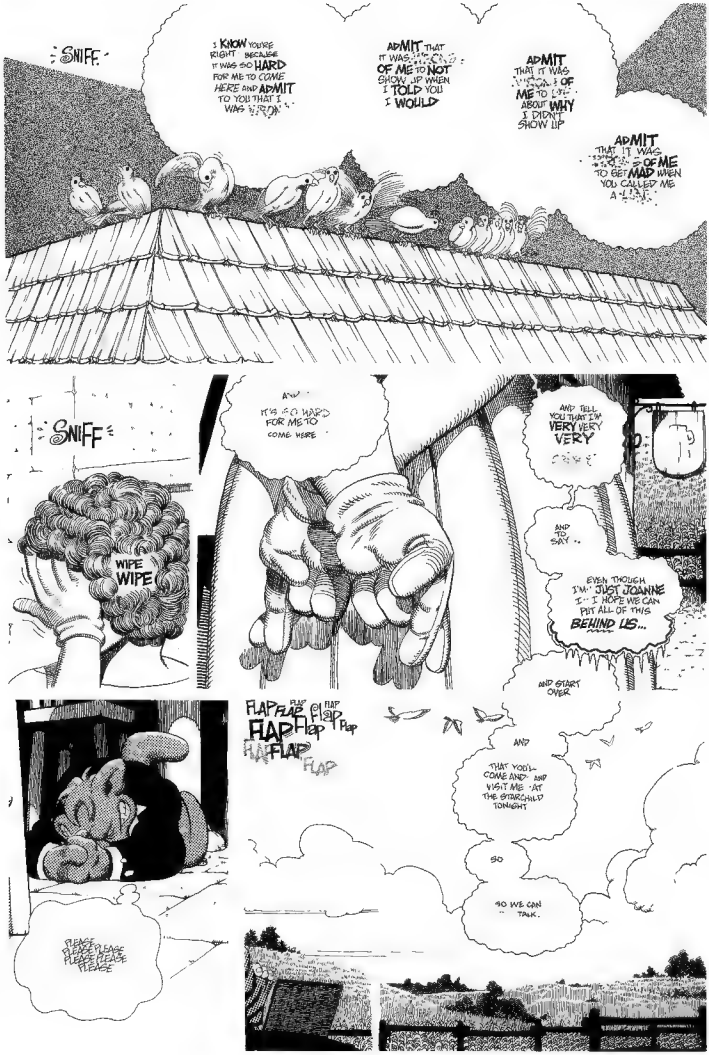
AND HE SAID
"LET'S GET CLOSER TO THE FIRE!"
(YOU KNOW WHERE WHERE'S EVERYONE WAS)
(NAKED)
AND I SAID "PLEASE I I'M NOT LIKE THAT"
AND AND HE JUST LAUGHED AND AND HE GRABBED ME
AND AND HE STARTED SQUEEZING MY BREASTS
AND
AND TEARING MY CLOTHES
AND I SCREAMED
WHAT THE HECK S GIRLY-BOY LOOK NG AT?
AND I RAN AWAY SNIFF AND I THOUGHT "WHY OH WHY DIDN'T I GO A FA RICK INSTEAD OF THIS AWFUL MO CK ? ? ? RICK WOULDN'T HAVE BEHAVED LIKE THAT RICK SNIFF!"
"RICK IS NIC!"

SHE CAME BACK!

PLEASE FARGO DON'T LET RICKY GO DO ANYTHING STUPID TO SCARE HER AWAY OR MAKE HER MAD PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE I'VE BEEN GOOD I HAVEN'T BEEN DRINKING (EXCEPT FOR BONFIRE NIGHT AND CHRISTMAS) I HAVEN'T BEEN SMOKING AND I DEFINITELY HAVEN'T SLEPT WITH A HARLOT & NOT JOANNE LEFT AND I DEFINITELY PROMISED TO TRY TO BE GOOD ALL THE TIME OH PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE

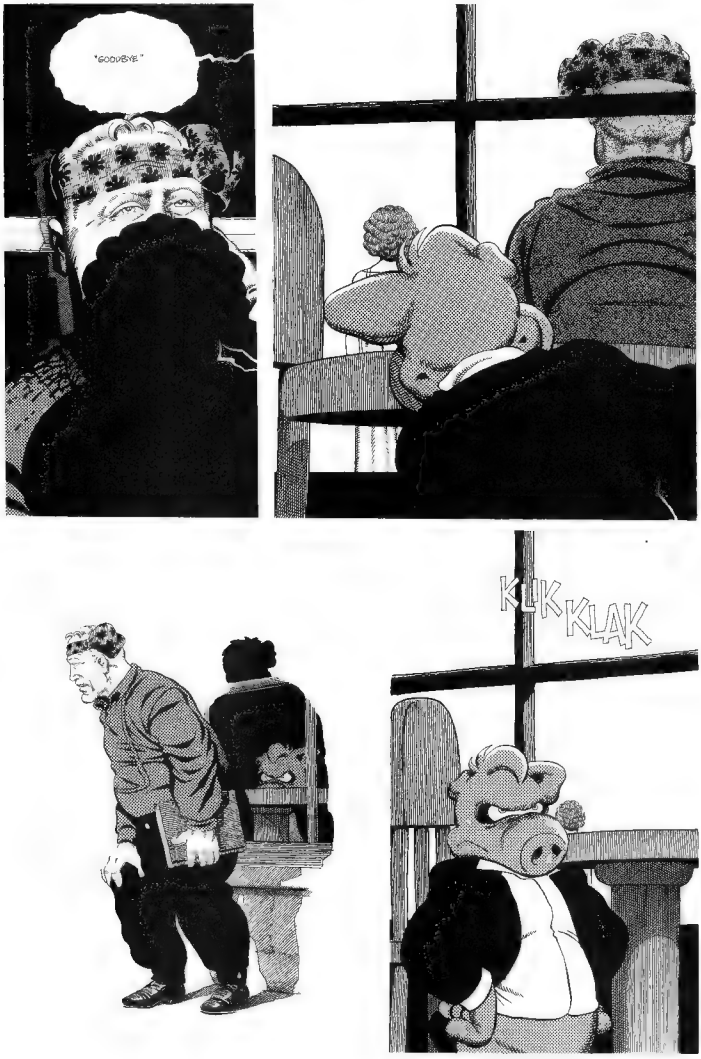


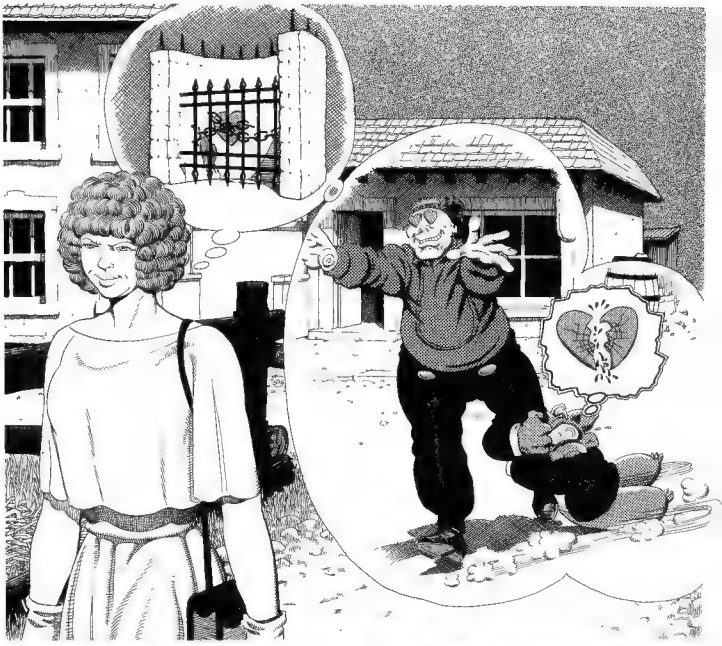



SNIFF
I KNOW YOU'RE RIGHT BECAUSE IT WAS SO HARD FOR ME TO COME HERE AND ADMIT TO YOU THAT I WAS WRONG
ADMIT THAT IT WAS OF ME TO NOT SHOW UP WHEN I TOLD YOU I WOULD
ADMIT THAT IT WAS [illegible] OF ME TO LIE ABOUT WHY I DIDN'T SHOW UP
ADMIT THAT IT WAS [illegible] OF ME TO GET MAD WHEN YOU CALLED ME A LIAR.
SNIFF
WIPE WIPE
AND IT'S SO HARD FOR ME TO COME HERE
AND TELL YOU THAT I'M VERY VERY VERY
AND TO SAY
EVEN THOUGH I'M JUST JOANNE I HOPE WE CAN PUT ALL OF THIS BEHIND US...
AND START OVER
FLAP FLAP FLAP FLAP FLAP FLAP FLAP FLAP FLAP FLAP
AND
THAT YOU'LL COME AND VISIT ME AT THE STARCHILD TONIGHT
SO
SO WE CAN TALK.
PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE

IF NOT
SNIFF
IF YOU HATE ME
AND I'D NEVER WANT TO SEE
SNIFF
AT LEAST I'LL KNOW THAT I D D WHAT WAS RIGHT
COMING HERE.

TO SAY "THANK YOU".
AND
"I M SC O".
AND


"GOODBYE."
KLIK KLAK



WELL?

AARDVARK COMMENT

Dear Dave and anyone else out there in radio land:

I do apologize for having handwritten this letter. I'm sure that you won't care (or at least I think I'm sure; however my handwriting is not the world's best. Of course, I also no longer own a typewriter).

Also, amongst other such annoying matters, I happen to be on the A-V mailing list, and I think I haven't notified you about the change. (The old address was 18 Lake Road, Dryden, NY, 13053-9723 U.S.A. The new one is above in the letterhead.)

Now, I'll try to get to the more interesting bits.

This is something of an "update" letter, in that I haven't written for, oh, about two years...I think. It's more important to me than it would be to you, so I'll just try to keep things relevant to the issues at hand.

I enjoyed your "correspondence" with Alan Moore very, very much (also your much earlier dialogue with Neil Gaiman), and while I know that some of your more rarefied observations probably sailed right over my little head, I think it would be very valuable indeed to print anything of this, er, sort of thing again. (Was that even English?) That is, if the occasion ever arises again, but thank you for doing it in the first place! I enjoy having my mind stretched, and I hope other *Cerebus* readers do as well. (Also, I thought it was important to thank you for printing it, as all the literal-minded *Cerebus* readers probably wrote in to say, "That sucks" and "You're a boring old fart," if they haven't switched back to reading *X-Men* already.)

I'd also like to comment on two letters: First, David Groenewegen's letter in 221, and, second, Sky Woodruff's letter in 222. If you think this is good enough to print, or, I should say, if it actually gets printed, I'll continue on like I'm actually writing to the people involved; if not, you can use it as food for thought. It doesn't bother me either way. Here goes.

David, you mentioned a number of famous "mama's boys," along with a point, something along the lines of "Look at all the pacesetters here," concluding with an observation about what a generation of Cirinist-era "mama's boys" might be like or do.

I realize that, for good or for worse, many important people (Hearst, Presley, Ford, and to some extent Jackie Robinson) made your list, and many people who haven't done much of anything in terms of "influence" also made your list (Elton John, David Niven, and Bill Clinton spring to mind). Whether these men are worth anything is, of course, all up to the individual. *but...*

Why does this mean anything?

The logical deduction seems to be, "Whoa, man, Cirinists would produce a shitload of these guys."

Well, David, not to be rude of anything, but...out of all the people/men on your list, I could think of only four who really had an influence on our culture (make that eight: I forgot Keef and "all the Beatles except Paul," sorry). The rest are either pop-culture "heroes," athletes, or Bill Clinton (failed politician, one of the most powerful men in the world, and he's inept.)

We are a long way from discussing, say, Alexander the Great or Napoleon (although Napoleon was a little bit of a mama's boy) or even Adolf Hitler. I could have missed someone in the rush, but very few of these men have been historically important or have "shaped the world." There isn't a point to be made here. All of these men were very different people who may not have been influenced by their upbringing or who may have been dominated by it.

Not being up to the task, I won't try to put together a list of macho guys who were highly influenced by their fathers and who had an equal importance to the world, although I think it would be easy.

At any rate, though, there wouldn't be a point to it, because — and here's my point — who's really running the household anyway? It's not going to be Mister Husband who has a degrading and pointless job in the city; it's going to be the woman *anyway.*

Women have de facto control of their households. It's where a woman feels safest (although not with a possible serial rapist loose 2,500 miles away — then she wants deadbolts on all the doors), where she keeps everything she values and loves most. The husband is allowed control of only those areas where he won't interfere with the rest of the house; his hobbies are *usually* only those that won't let him stay away from her *too* long. I admit I've been snide, but even feminists might not dare to disagree that most of the most important conditioning factors come from the mother of the family (i.e., "Don't put that in your mouth; you don't know where it's been" and other favorites from our youth, ha-ha).

In many, maybe even most families, the wife exerts control over the finances, either by doing them herself or by spending all the money. Men stay married when they have a family only because they feel obligated to: he loves the wife and kids, but, damn, where has all the money gone? (And this isn't a given, either; look at divorce statistics.)

I think this is all ground covered much better in *Reads*, but, basically, mommy runs the house in most families — no need to speculate about a "Cirinist era." (We're already in a female-centered era, anyway, where the men play the fool, the tragic hero, and the chorus — occasionally all at once, but very rarely do they play the central role any longer.)

So, in any case, even if a literal "Cirinist era" did occur, the quality of "mama's boys" wouldn't vary at all. The same (seemingly) meaningful statistics would appear, with only slight variations. But I didn't mean to shit on David's parade — it was worth discussing anyway.

On to Sky Woodruff! Sky, if you want to discuss *Reads* and its issues that badly, I'm game. I'm not the world's best debater, but what the hell.

My thoughts on women have been (lately) that the only real thing to be said on the subject is: "They're not like men." Ergo, they can't be inferior or superior. (Have I heard this before?) I hear a voice saying, "Apples and oranges, shithead, apples and oranges," lighting a cigarette and chuckling.) Actually, that's only *one* thought. I guess I can't count.

Perhaps it would be more enlightening if I put this in more personal terms:

All my life, I was a knee-jerk liberal (or at least when I was in school). Being a noble romantic, at least in my mind, I thought I had to stand up for "the poor downtrodden peoples of the world," naively not realizing that I wasn't wanted or tolerated in those debates. The one argument for feminism, the one that always snares guys with its logic, is: "Women are human beings. Why shouldn't they do whatever men do?"

Because women are as dumb as men.

This escaped me for years, and whenever I or any other guy tried to make a point about abortion, say, we would be shouted down ferociously with the cry, "Women have the babies! You can't decide!" (A verbatim quote from a girl I knew in school, by the way.) I could point out the stupidity of that quote, but it would be like shooting a dead horse.

So I tried to be a feminist, until I went through some very degrading experiences (which are none of anybody's business; this isn't a lonely-hearts club anymore, I hope), and then *Reads* came along, and I misinterpreted it and finally (through boring means) had the truth pounded into my thick skull with a hammer and a chisel.

The only reason I mention this is because, whether out of ideology or wrong-headed chivalry, most modern guys think this way, as if they still have to "protect the damsel in distress," even though she doesn't want to be protected, saved, or touched by anyone less than Prince Charming, Jesus, Fabio, Brad Pitt, name the anonymous pretty boy of the month. (Just as an afterthought, how many potential soulmates do you think a woman goes through in her lifetime?)

These men probably also believe in UFOs, true love, the Holy Grail, and Santa Claus. (But not the Easter Bunny, because he's a sissy and cries if you punch him.)

Feminism has managed to reshape modern culture to the point that a man has to stop and wonder, "Will *she* like this?" no matter what he does. The only backlash to feminism comes from the radical conservatives, who are equally illogical and equally wrong (and who make their points by saying, "*Your a fagot, burn in hel yu homoh*," unless they happen to be William F. Buckley, who probably wears out thesauruses and unabridged dictionaries like other people wear out their socks). I would bet that these people stick to a Cirinist-type agenda no matter what they profess to think or feel.

Combined with a "compassion-crumbling-into-pity" agenda — the liberal agenda — the whole of Western culture has become something of a ludicrous side show. (Watch The Dancing Cripples And Give Them Lots Of Money So They Don't Feel Bad!) It's a condescending place to live; the whole premise is that if we pass enough laws and throw enough money at everyone, everyone will feel good! (The related point is, of course: "They can have their rights as human beings, as long as they stay out of *my* neighborhood.")

Individual merit and achievement have been replaced with quotas, "color-positive" hiring, and a ridiculous doublethink that uses governmental oppression (through the passing of silly laws) and societal taboos (you are no longer allowed to look at a woman for more than a microsecond, but it's all right if she leads an earnest discussion of some man's butt and its apparent virtues, while staring at *her*, which I admit is crude — or simply looking at her will offend her, so of course it's not allowed) to bring about some sort of fuzzy, nondefined "utopia" (where everyone will feel good).

It's all stupid. Moreover, it's bitterly amusing, unless you go to prison for selling comic books. Then you might be a wee bit pissed off.

It's a coup, and the only reason it happened is because guys are trained not to say "no" and to always think "Ladies first."

In a better world, a more mature world, achievement would be the only measurement of anybody's quality, regardless of race or gender, period. Despite the fact that I have sometimes been called a "misogynist" (simply because I can't bring myself to open my fly, crack my skull, and "love everybody" while I get roped into some sort of incredibly stupid job and an awful marriage), I have every respect for anyone who is intelligent, resourceful, and tough enough to meet his or her own goals. Why shouldn't I?

Racism is a stupid thing because it denies entire races rights that they really should be entitled to in a sensible world. Yet racism is considered a fact of life, and everyone practices some form of it. It is as racist to deny a white man an opportunity he might deserve as it is to do so to a black man of equal ability, and it is also racist to hire the black man, not because of his abilities, but to meet a quota. The Nazis had quotas, and they filled theirs handsomely. We don't send people to gas ovens — not yet, anyway — but the operating principle is the same.

Men might have implemented these things, but only to please the woman behind the curtain. The mad mutant child of Ms. is everywhere.

As I said before, the only reason feminism makes no sense is that women are as dumb as men. Except women rarely tell you to your face what they really feel — they are more cunning, and there are more of them.

Being physically weaker (Woman: "We are not! We can be as strong as you!"), all women had to do to gain their power was to realize men will do nearly anything for sex.

Thus was born modern civilization.

Guys, the only thing I'd say is — Keep it *in* your pants.

Well, I think I've just plagiarized half of *Reads*, but, damn, it sure was right. No one is willing to discuss the issue, not even in a comic-book letters page (other than to make those pointless, cretinous "arguments" about whether or not Dave Sim is an asshole, even though they might not, would not know Dave Sim, the man, from their *own* assholes; oh, yes, I remember the post-186 letters

pages well). I've tried to add to the argument, and probably failed and was boring in the process, but I'd like to keep the issue "aired out," so to speak.

If I ever get the chance, though, Dave, I would like to discuss my theories of reality with you. I don't know how interesting my ideas are, but it's better than keeping them all in my head (day-to-day conversations being what they are). I'm not quite on your level, but I can't stop thinking, can I?

Oh, yes. *Cerebus*. I just reread the whole monster recently, and the *mind game* issues — particularly the Suenteus Po chess mistake *and* its nature — wasn't it involving the Queen rather than the King? I don't remember, it was three months ago — were extremely interesting in the light set up by *Minds* and, to a small extent, *Guys* (which, for my money, outdid *Jaka's Story* considerably, for all those people who still love *Jaka's Story* and consider it the high point, but I'm only one opinion, and "opinion" is the operative word). Congratulations on yet another leap forward. I think Gerhard also deserves some credit for being the best artist in comics (his only architectural rivals being Martin Wagner and Katsuhiro Otomo). And, well, Diana deserves a little nice nod for proofreading *Cerebus* instead of spending all her time editing for a *company* (sniff, sniff) and for having good taste.

And one last "thank you" for publishing those *Bob, the Angry Flower* strips. I'd buy the book but I can't afford to, so it's nice to see them. (I almost look forward to them now.) As good as 221 was, "Denuded" and "It's Over" were the best laughs I had all week ("What's up with your *head*, man?"), other than the letter from Robert Andrew Bottoms. I'd kill to see his oh-so-great list of superhero characters, just to laugh snidely at it. (Shows what kind of person I am.) Poor, poor, deluded Robert, he doesn't know *anything* about you, does he? It's almost cruel to make fun of such a guy. (Almost.)

I'll let you stop reading my drivel and go back to work now (which is the important thing). All the best and take care of yourself (same goes for everyone else, I guess).

Yours,
Scott E. Miller
4701 Skyline Dr.
Fort Collins, CO 80526

P.S. It's no surprise that television hypnotizes. The alpha state is what is induced during a hypnotic trance, so far as I know. I try to watch as little of it as possible (which means I watch the weather report). Strange, isn't it?

P.P.S. Wasn't that Norman Mailer who made a cameo in *Guys*? Nice Hirschfeld imitation! (Where were the Ninas?)

If you check your Guys *volume, pages 139 (top panel) and 140 (second panel), you will see two "Ninas" in the former picture — one at the bottom of Kingsley's right sideburn and one upside down in his hairline — and one "Nina" in the latter picture — again in Kingsley's right sideburn. Thanks for asking.*

Having resolved that I would print each of the four letters that came in expressing interest in my doing a "Mama's Boy" essay — if I got that many — I jumped the gun a little by printing the first three in issue 224. I was surprised when there was a lag of several weeks (maybe even a month or more) before the fourth one came in. When it proved to be your letter, Scott, well — I considered that I might have a wee problem. To put it bluntly, there was a lot of incoherence in it (which you admit yourself), a lot I agreed with, and a lot I disagreed with. I considered "blowing out the back of the book" (my personal expression for adding another eight-page signature) so I could answer the thousand and one subjects you brought up. Then I thought I would just highlight in italics the parts that I agreed with. Then, *I thought — no, let's just let it stand as is. After all, it's foolish of me to think that all of the guys out there who derived anything from* Reads *are only going to come to my own conclusions — or that I can somehow spend the rest of my life explaining what I intended to say every time people come to a different conclusion and imply that* their *conclusion is* my *conclusion. Anyway, you definitely gave Carol a headache with your handwriting, and you're sure to give Diana a headache when she proofreads it (sniff, sniff, indeed). And you gave me a headache wrestling with what was the* wisest *approach to printing your letter. So, congratulations, and Tylenols all around.*

On the plus side, it gave me a chance to tell my Mum that the essay was in the offing and what I would be using to lead it off, and it also gave me some time to develop the keynote of the piece and to ask my Mum and Dad about it when I took them out for dinner a couple of weeks back. So, "Mama's Boy" the essay -- next month (actually in a couple of hours for me, after I finish answering the mail and before I get to work on issue 227).

On an unrelated note, the Winner of the Cerebus 0 gold logo *is our old pal and '92 Tour Vet, MATT LEHMAN of Boston's Comicopia comic-book store. Those of you with no real lives to speak of will recall that I offered a* Cerebus 0 gold logo *to the first person who could remind me of the name of the authoress of* If You Can't Live Without Me, Why Aren't You Dead? *Matt declined his gold logo 0 in favour of being mentioned here. Well, too bad, Matt. You're getting one anyway since the decision of the judges is final. And the answer is: CYNTHIA HEIMEL! Matt sealed his win by providing the additional information that Heimel also wrote* Get Your Tongue Out of My Mouth, I'm Kissing You Good-Bye. *Steve Peters wins a gold logo 0 for pointing out that I left off the* "Yet" -- *that is,* If You Can't Live Without Me, Why Aren't You Dead *Yet?"Michael Carver of Lowell, MA wins a gold logo 0 for informing me that another Heimel book is called* When Your Phone Doesn't Ring, It'll Be Me. *And little Robert Rowe of North Hollywood, Lalaland wins a gold logo 0 for providing the name of the publisher: Harperperennial Library, the ISBN number: 0060974788 (hike!), and the fact that it is available from http://www.amazon.com. for $9.60 U.S.*

continued

FROM COVER

Mailer nodded. He felt no ease for any of these suggestions. He did not even know if he truly supported the turning in of draft cards. It seemed to him at times that the students who disliked the war most should perhaps be the first to volunteer for the Army in order that their ideas have currency in the Army as well. Without them, the armed forces could more easily become Glamour State for the more mindless regions of the proletariat if indeed the proletariat was not halfway to Storm Troop Junction already. The military could make an elite corps best when the troops were homogenized. On the other hand, no soldier could go into combat with the secret idea that he would not fire a gun. If nothing else, it was unfair to friends in his outfit; besides it suggested the suicidal. No, the iron of the logic doubtless demanded that if you disapproved of the war too much to shoot Vietcong, then your draft card was for burning. But Mailer arrived at this conclusion somewhat used up as we have learned from the number of decisions he had to make at various moral crossroads en route and so felt no enthusiasm whatsoever for the preliminary demonstration at the Department of Justice tomorrow in which he would take part. To the contrary, he wondered if he would burn or surrender his own draft card if he were young enough to own one, and he did not really know the answer. How then could he advise others to take the action, or even associate his name? Still, he was going to be there.

He started to talk of these doubts with Lowell, but he could hear the sound of his own voice, and it offended him. It seemed weak, plaintive, as if his case were — no less incriminating word — phony, he did not quite know why. So he shut up.

A silence.

"You know, Norman," said Lowell in his fondest voice, "Elizabeth and I really think you're the finest journalist in America."

Mailer knew Lowell thought this — Lowell had even sent him a postcard once to state the enthusiasm. But the novelist had been shrewd enough to judge that Lowell sent many postcards to many people — it did not matter that Lowell was by overwhelming consensus judged to be the best, most talented, and most distinguished poet in America — it was still necessary to keep the defense lines in good working order. A good word on a card could keep many a dangerous recalcitrant in the ranks.

Therefore, this practice annoyed Mailer. The first card he'd ever received from Lowell was on a book of poems, *Deaths for the Ladies and other disasters* it had been called, and many people had thought the book a joke which whatever its endless demerits, it was not. Not to the novice poet at least. When Lowell had written that he liked the book, Mailer next waited for some word in print to canonize his thin tome; of course it never came. If Lowell were to begin to award living American poets in critical print, two hundred starving worthies could with fairness hold out their bowl before the escaped Novelist would deserve his turn. Still Mailer was irked. He felt he had been part of a literary game. When the second card came a few years later telling him he was the best journalist in America, he did not answer. Elizabeth Hardwick, Lowell's wife, had just published a review of *An American Dream* in *Partisan Review* which had done its best to disembowel the novel. Lowell's card might have arrived with the best of motives, but its timing suggested to Mailer an exercise in neutralsmanship — neutralize the maximum of possible future risks. Mailer was not critically equipped for the task, but there was always the distant danger that some bright and not unauthoritative voice, irked at Lowell's enduring hegemony, might come along with a long lance and presume to tell America that posterity would judge Allen Ginsberg the greater poet.

This was doubtless desperately unfair to Lowell who, on the basis of two kind cards, was now judged by Mailer to possess an undue unchristian talent for literary logrolling. But then Mailer was prickly. Let us hope it was not because he had been beaten a little too often by book reviewers, since the fruit of specific brutality is general suspicion.

Still Lowell now made the mistake of repeating his remark. "Yes Norman, I really think you are the best journalist in America."

The pen may be mightier than the sword, yet at their best, each belong to extravagant men. "Well, Cal," said Mailer, using Lowell's nickname for the first time, "there are days when I think of myself as being the best writer in America."

The effect was equal to walloping a roundhouse right into the heart of an English boxer who has been hitherto right up on his toes. Consternation, not Britannia, now ruled the waves. Perhaps Lowell had a moment when he wondered who was guilty of declaring war on the minuet. "Oh, Norman, oh, certainly," he said, "I didn't mean to imply, heavens no, it's just I have such *respect* for good journalism"

"Well, I don't know that I do," said Mailer. "It's much harder to write" — the next said with great and false graciousness — "a good poem."

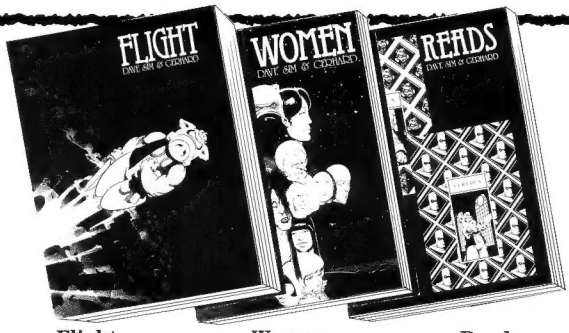
"Yes, of course."

Chuckles. Headmastermanship.

Chuckles. Fellow headmastermanship.

They were both now somewhat spoiled for each other. Mailer got up abruptly to get a drink. He was shrewd enough to know that Lowell, like many another aristocrat before him, respected abrupt departures. The pain of unexpected rejection is the last sweet vice left to an aristocrat (unless they should happen to be not aristocrats, but secret monarchs — then watch for your head!).

Last issue's excerpt: F. Scott Fitzgerald
"Magnetism"



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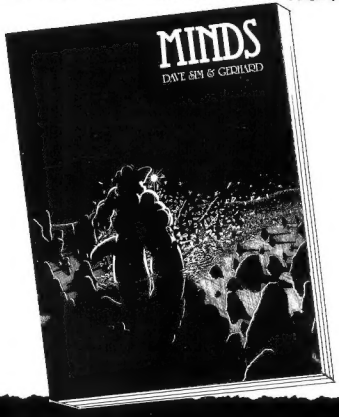

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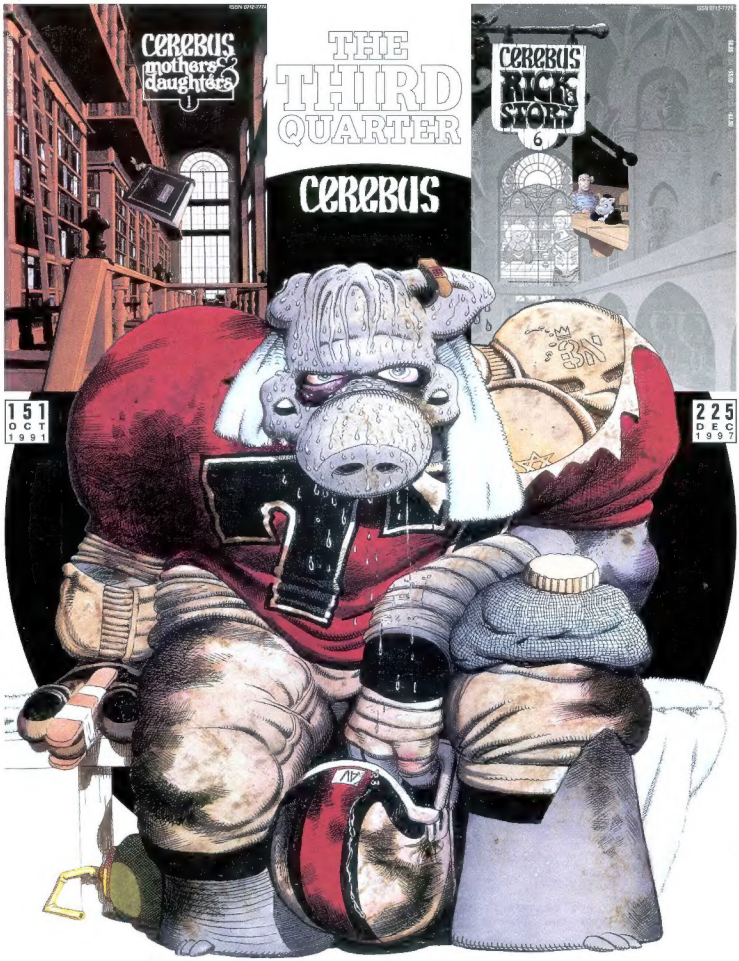

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